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Census Records



1950 Census: Form P1, Population and Housing Schedule Questions 29 to 33 for All Persons on “Sample” Lines Who Were 14 Years of Age and Over

Posted by Claire Kluskens  in [Census Records](#) on Jun 21, 2021 8:02:23 AM

This is our seventh detailed look at the Form P1, Population and Housing Schedule, that was used in most of the United States. This post will focus on questions 29 to 33 that were asked of persons on “sample” lines who were 14 years of age and over.

Employment Questions

<p>If looking for work (Yes in item 17)—</p> <p>How many weeks has he been looking for work? (Number of weeks)</p>	<p>Last year, in how many weeks did this person do any work at all, not counting work around the house?</p> <p>(Number of weeks in 1949)</p>
29	30

Item 29. If “Yes” in item 17: How many weeks has he been looking for work? The enumerator was to enter a whole number. Half a week or more counted as a whole week. Less than half a week was zero. If the person responded with the number of months, the enumerator was to multiply the number of months by $4 \frac{1}{3}$. Thus, if the person said they had been looking for work for two months, then $2 \times 4 \frac{1}{3} = 8 \frac{2}{3}$, which rounds up to 9 weeks.

The time period in item 29 referred to the number of “continuous weeks up to the Saturday preceding the day” on which the person was enumerated. Thus, the enumerator was instructed, “If you are enumerating on Wednesday, April 5, and the person started looking for work Wednesday, March 22, count him as looking for work 2 weeks. (From Wednesday, March 22 to Saturday, April 1, is 1 week and 4 days, which is counted as 2 weeks.)”

Item 30. Last year (1949), in how many weeks did this person do any work (excluding work around the home)? The enumerator was to “Count as a whole week, a week in which *any* work was done” from

January to December 1949. For the most extreme example, if a person worked *only* every Saturday for a

whole year, the answer was still “52.” Weeks worked included weeks of active service in the Armed Forces, paid vacation, sick leave, or other paid absences. An example of a “paid absence” was a school teacher who worked 40 weeks, but was paid for a full year (52 weeks). If a person reported time worked in number of months, the enumerator was to multiply the number of months by $4\frac{1}{3}$ as discussed above.

Income Questions

FOR PERSONS 14 Y			
Income received by this person in 1949			
Last year (1949), how much money did he earn working as an employee for wages or salary? (Enter amount before deductions for taxes, etc.)	Last year, how much money did he earn working in his own business, professional practice, or farm? (Enter net income)	Last year, how much money did he receive from interest, dividends, veteran's allowances, pensions, rents, or other income (aside from earnings)?	LEAVE BLANK
31a	31b	31c	

Item 31a. Last year (1949), how much money (before taxes or other deductions) did he earn working as an employee for wages or salary? The enumerator was to record the amount to the nearest whole dollar (no cents) and to write “10,000+” for anyone who reported an amount more than \$10,000. The enumerator was to accept the respondent’s best estimate if he (or she) did not know the exact amount. Wages or salary included tips, piece-rate payments, sales commissions, nonmilitary cash bonuses, profit-sharing amounts,

and Armed Forces or National Guard pay. (Average family income in 1950 was \$3,300 .)

The enumerator was cautioned that “take-home pay” was not total pay; “it may be necessary to itemize the deductions in order to get an estimate of the total before deductions.” The respondent could exclude “in kind” pay (food or lodging), and travel reimbursements. Armed Forces pay included base pay, rental and subsistence allowances, longevity pay, flight pay, and so forth, but “standard dependence allotments (\$22 or \$27 per month) should be deducted.”

Item 31b. Last year (1949), how much money (net income) did he earn working in his own business, professional practice, or farm? Just as with Item 31a, the enumerator was to accept the respondent’s best estimate if he (or she) did not know the exact amount. Net income was the amount left over after business expenses (cost of goods purchased, rent, utilities, depreciation, wages and salaries, interest, business taxes) were subtracted from business income (revenue from fees, royalties, partnership income, sales of merchandise or services). Capital expenditures (purchase or permanent improvements of real estate, buildings, or machinery) did not count as business expenses. Possible responses were:

- An amount to the nearest whole dollar (no cents)

- “10,000+” for any amount more than \$10,000
- “Even” if business revenues just balanced expenses
- “Loss” if revenues were less than expenses

Item 31c. Last year, how much money did he receive from interest, dividends, veteran’s allowances, pensions, rents, or other income (excluding salary or wages)? Just as with Item 31a, the enumerator was to accept the respondent’s best estimate if he (or she) did not know the exact amount.

Examples of “other income” include alimony, annuity payments, contributions from others (such as children giving money to support elderly parents), Armed Forces dependency allotments, interest, dividends, periodic payments from estates and trusts, fiduciary income, gambling gains, periodic payments from an inheritance or insurance policy, military bonuses, mustering out pay, pensions, relief (welfare) payments, rental income, payments from roomers and boarders, Social Security benefits, unemployment compensation, veterans benefits, and workmen’s compensation.

“Other income” did not include occasional cash gifts; receipt of repayments of principal of a loan or savings bond; an allowance of money given by one member of a family to another in the same household; borrowed money (loans); capital gains (and losses) by someone who was not in the business of selling stocks, bonds, real estate, or cars; lump sum payments from insurance policies, inheritances, and so forth; “in kind” pay (food, lodging, and so forth); refunds of money for merchandise purchased but returned; and withdrawal of savings from the bank.

Item 32a. Last year (1949), how much money did his relatives in this household earn working for wages or salary (before taxes and other deductions)? This question sought a total dollar amount for “all relatives of the family head now living in the same household, including the wife, children (even if under 14 years of age), parents, or other persons in the household related to the head by blood, marriage, or adoption.” The amount reported in Item 31a by the person on the sample line was not to be repeated on this line, otherwise the same directions and guidance given for Item 31a applied to Item 32a.

Item 32b. Last year (1949), how much money did his relatives in this household earn in their own business, professional practice, or farm (net income)? This question sought a total dollar amount for “all relatives of the family head now living in the same household, including the wife, children (even if under 14 years of age), parents, or other persons in the household related to the head by blood, marriage, or adoption.” The amount reported in Item 31b by the person on the sample line was not to be repeated on this line, otherwise the same directions and guidance given for Item 31b applied to Item 32b.

Item 32c. Last year, how much money did his relatives in this household receive from interest, dividends, veteran’s allowances, pensions, rents, or other income (excluding salary or wages)? This question sought a total dollar amount for “all relatives of the family head now living in the same household, including the wife, children (even if under 14 years of age), parents, or other persons in the household related to the head by blood, marriage, or adoption.” The amount reported in Item 31c by the person on the

sample line was not to be repeated on this line, otherwise the same directions and guidance given for Item 31c applied to Item 32c.

In seeking answers to Items 31a, 31b, 31c, 32a, 32b, and 32c, the enumerator was instructed that he or she “should not ask the respondent to refer to income tax forms, but if he [or she] does so voluntarily, make use of the information.”

Procedures for the Enumerator to Follow if the Respondent Objected to Sharing Financial Information

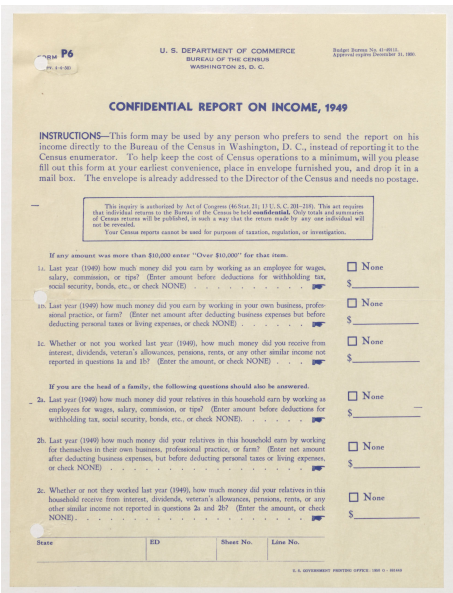
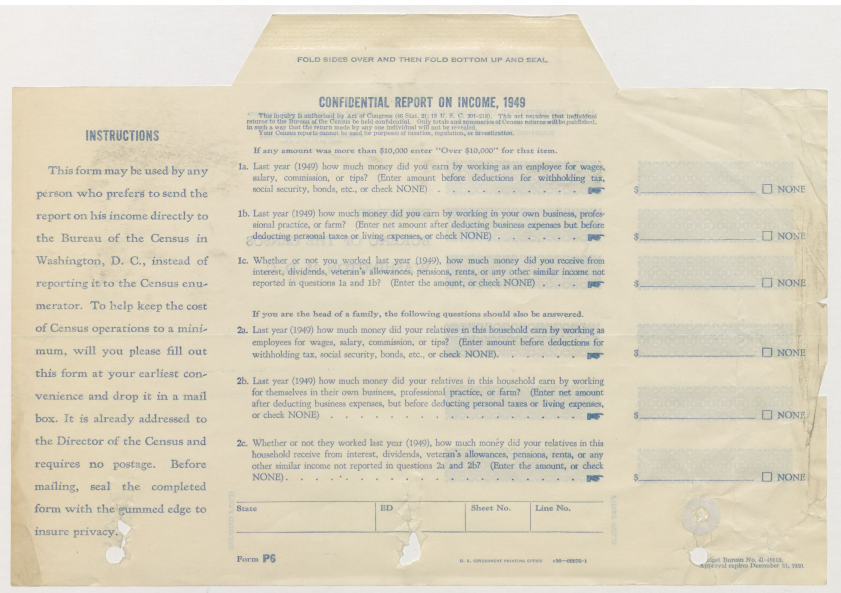
If the respondent objected to sharing financial information, the enumerator had several “talking points” to try to overcome the objections:

- **Fear of disclosure to others:** The enumerator was to explain that the enumerator and all Census employees were sworn to keep the answers confidential with heavy penalties of imprisonment and fine for improper disclosure. The FBI could not look at Census records. The Census Bureau published only statistical summaries.
- **Why couldn't the Bureau get this information from Federal tax returns?** The enumerator was to explain that tax returns were confidential and the Census Bureau could not get them from the Bureau of Internal Revenue. Federal tax returns weren't useful for statistical purposes, either, because they did “not cover all people or all kinds of income” or could they be correlated to “age, education, and other items needed to understand the differences in income.”
- **Why was the income data needed?** The enumerator was to explain that the income questions were strongly requested by business, research, labor groups, and public agencies, and were given these examples:
 - Business wanted to find out where to locate new sales outlets and plants; whether people could afford to buy low, medium, or high-priced goods; and what kinds of homes should be built.
 - Government agencies wanted to determine needed programs for housing, social security, unemployment compensation, and community services.
- **Are the income questions legal?** The enumerator was to explain that the census was authorized by the Constitution and laws enacted by Congress. Financial questions had been in population censuses as far back as 1850.

If the respondent still objected, the enumerator was to hand the person a “Form P6, Confidential Report on Income, 1949,” that the respondent could fill out, seal, and mail directly to the Census Bureau in

Washington, DC. No signature or postage were required.

- The enumerator was to write on the form the State, Enumeration District number, sheet number, and line number of the person for whom the income answers were required. This information would enable the Bureau to later annotate the Form P1, Population and Housing Schedule, with the information provided on the P6, Confidential Report on Income.
- If two or more household members age 14 years and over fell on sample lines, then separate forms were to be left for each of them.
- The enumerator was to write "Income form left" on Item 31a.
- If the respondent filled out the form and gave it back to the enumerator, the enumerator was to mail it immediately.

P6 - Version 1 - Required an Envelope	P6 - Version 2 - Self-Mailer
	

Above: Two Versions of Form P6, Confidential Report on Income, 1949, from Binder 71-F, Form P6, Confidential Report on Income (National Archives Identifier [206240480](#)).

Men's Military Service

Item 33. If male, did he ever serve in the U.S. Armed Forces during (33a) World War I, (33b) World War II, or (33c) any other time including present service? (Yes/No). Sadly, this question only applied to males, even though many women served during World War II in the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC), Women's Army Corps (WAC), and United States Naval Reserve (Women's Reserve) that is better known as the WAVES (Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service).

If Male— (Ask each question)			
Did he ever serve in the U. S. Armed Forces during—			
World War II	World War I	Any other time, includ- ing pres- ent serv- ice	LEAVE BLANK
33a	33b	33c	H

Service in the U.S. Armed Forces was defined as active duty for any amount of time in the U.S. Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, or any reserve branch of those organizations, whether or not they went overseas or saw combat. The instructions to enumerators took pains to note that service in the Armed Forces included were men who were inducted and then discharged after a few days or weeks, and those stationed at desk jobs.

Military service did not include persons in the Merchant Marine, civilian employees of defense agencies, or National Guard service before or after World War II.

World War I was defined as April 6, 1917, to November 11, 1918 (in Europe) or to April 1, 1920 (in Russia). The Bureau's choice of November 11, 1918 (Armistice Day) for the termination date in Western Europe is interesting since and U.S. formal involvement in the conflict did not officially terminate until July 2, 1921, when President

Warren G. Harding signed the Knox-Porter Resolution, and some American troops remained overseas until January 1923.

World War II was defined as September 16, 1940, to July 25, 1947.

“Any other time including present service” was intended to capture any military service other than the World War I and World War II service defined above.

Adapted from Form P1, 1950 Census of Population and Housing, and [Urban and Rural Enumerator's Reference Manual, 1950 Census of the United States, pages 52-59 and 65-66.](#)

183 Views

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Jan Murphy Jun 23, 2021 3:25 PM

I'm enjoying the entire series, and greatly appreciate the "View as PDF" option, but for this installment, the View to PDF isn't working. I get an "failed to load PDF document" error.

Thanks Claire for a fabulous deep-dive! I'm looking forward to the rest of the series.

Actions

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